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SUBJECT: GRUEVSKI HOSTS AND TOASTS ALBANIANS IN REGIONAL EVENT

Sensitive but unclassified- please protect accordingly

¶1. (U)SUMMARY: The Prime Ministers of Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo attended a GOM organized reception in Skopje to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Albanian alphabet. PM Gruevski wisely used the event to reach out to the Albanian community throughout the region as well as in Macedonia. End Summary

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

¶2. (U) In 1908, Albanian intellectuals from different countries and faiths gathered in the Macedonian city of Bitola (Manastir in Albanian) to establish a unified alphabet for the Albanian language. The 150 delegates decided in favor of using the Latin script. This event followed the 1878 Albanian League of Prizren (Kosovo) that sought autonomy from the Ottoman Empire and preceded the Declaration of Albania's Independence in Vlore (Albania) four years later, in ¶1912.

A REGIONAL EVENT

¶3. (U)The Ambassador attended the formal reception to mark the 100th anniversary of the Albanian alphabet on November 22 in Skopje, organized under the auspices of GOM Deputy Prime Minister Ademi. Prime Ministers Gruevski, Berisha and Thaci (Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, respectively) attended the ceremony, which gave the event regional significance. The Presidents of the three countries' academies of science and arts also attended the event.

MESSAGES OF UNITY AND COMMON VALUES

¶4. (SBU) In a surprising gesture of support and goodwill, Macedonian PM Gruevski briefly addressed the audience in the Albanian language, citing November 22 as one of the most important days in the history of the Albanian people. He added that his government is dedicated to cultivating the historic values of all communities in Macedonia. "We share common values and this event shows unity in our country", Gruevski said.

¶5. (U) Albanian PM Berisha, thanked Gruevski and the GOM for honoring one of the most important events in the history of the Albanians. The declaration of Albania's independence, Berisha said, would not have occurred without the League of Prizren and the Congress of Manastir, adding that Albanians and Macedonians have a history of cooperation and a common struggle for freedom. Berisha expressed pride in what he perceives as Albania's increasing leadership role among e-Albanians in the region.

¶6. (SBU) Kosovo PM Thaci described Manastir (Bitola) as the Albanian alphabet's capital city, emphasizing the strong message this event sends to the Albanians in the region. Albanians naturally embraced the Latin alphabet due to their pro-western aspirations, according

to Thaci. Thaci also praised Macedonia's recognition of Kosovo's independence. "It is with this alphabet that good neighborly relations in the Balkans and our Euro-Atlantic integration will be written", Thaci added. In a side conversation with the Ambassador, Thaci indicated that he believed outstanding issues between Pristina and Skopje on border demarcation could be resolved in as little as ten days.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: We understand that Gruevski's e-Albanian coalition partners may have arranged the event without the PM's initial agreement, although Gruevski mentioned to Ambassador Reeker on November 9, plans for a "mini summit." Nevertheless, PM Gruevski's participation in this event and the positive messages of cooperation and mutual respect shared by all three PM's suggest that- in spite of cool interethnic relations in Macedonia- Gruevski still recognizes the political and economic importance of outreach to the Albanian community in the region, including in Macedonia. End Comment.

REEKER